

CHAPTER 47

Muhammad

(REVEALED AT MADÎNAH: 4 sections; 38 verses)

This chapter is entitled *Muhammad*, and also *Qitâl* or *War*. The first title is due to the fact that this chapter foretells that the condition of those who believe in the Holy Prophet *Muhammad* will be improved. They were in a very helpless condition at the time of its revelation, having fled from their homes for the safety of their lives, and being threatened by a powerful enemy in their new home. The other title is due to the fact that this chapter shows that the punishment with which the disbelievers were threatened would be brought about by war, in which their ringleaders would perish; others would be made prisoners or vanquished and brought low. War is also a prelude to the religious awakening which is to be brought about by Islâm a second time.

Opening with the statement that the exertions of those who prevent people from accepting the Truth will be utterly fruitless, the first section goes on to say that this will be accomplished by war. The second section is mainly devoted to the same subject, and further states that Makkah will be subjugated. The third section refers to those who regarded this, the most righteous war in history, as a calamity. The fourth section states that a separation will occur between the truly faithful and the hypocrites.

The revelation of this chapter belongs to a period when war with the Quraish had not yet begun but when circumstances had arisen which showed war to be inevitable. Portions of the chapter may have been revealed during the Holy Prophet's flight from Makkah, but, as a whole, it must be assigned to the first year of the Flight, and therefore it is to be placed before the battle of Badr. The *Hâ Mîm* group of Makkan chapters is here followed by three Madînah chapters, the 47th, 48th and 49th, which show that all difficulties will be overcome by the help of Allâh, and Islâm will triumph in the world.

SECTION 1: Opponents will perish in War

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 Those who disbelieve and turn (human beings) from Allâh's way, He will destroy their works.^a

2 And those who believe and do good, and believe in that which has been revealed to Muhammad — and it is the Truth from their *Rabb* — He will remove their evil from them and improve their condition.^a

3 That is because those who disbelieve follow falsehood, and those who believe follow the Truth from their *Rabb*. Thus does Allâh set forth their descriptions for human beings.^a

4 So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, smite the necks; then, when you have overcome them, make (them) prisoners, and afterwards (set them free) as a favour or for ransom till the war lay down its burdens.^a That (shall be so). And if Allâh please, He would certainly exact retribution from them, but that He may try

some of you by means of others.^b And those who are slain in the way of Allâh, He will never allow their deeds to perish.

1a. *Adalla-hû* is synonymous with *ahlaka-hû* or *adâ 'a-hû* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane), the first meaning *he destroyed him* or *caused him to perish*, and the second *he wasted it* or *made it ineffective*. The significance is that their endeavours to uproot Truth will be brought to naught. This chapter was revealed at a time when the enemies of Islâm were at the height of their power, and had apparently uprooted Islâm from Makkah, and were preparing to give it a death-blow at Madînah.

2a. This is another prophecy, a counterpart of the one contained in the previous verse. The Muslims, whose condition, it is announced here, will be bettered, were in a most helpless condition at the time. The majority of them had just fled from their homes, almost penniless, to save their lives and to settle down at Madînah where, however, they were not left alone, the enemy being determined to crush them by force.

3a. *Amthâl* is the plural of *mathal*, which means a *description, condition, state* or *case*, or a *description by way of comparison*, i.e., a *parable* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). Verse 1 tells us of the condition of those who tried to uproot Truth, stating that their endeavours will be brought to naught, while verse 2 speaks of those who accept the Truth and states that their material as well as moral condition will be bettered. These are the *conditions* or *descriptions* referred to in verse 3.

4a. The word *athkhana* occurring in this passage has been fully explained in 8:67a. This passage mentions the only case in which prisoners of war can be taken, and thus condemns the practice of slavery, according to which men could be seized anywhere and sold into slavery. Here we are told that prisoners of war can only be taken after meeting an enemy in regular battle, and even in that case they must be set free, either as a favour or after taking ransom. It was the former of these alternatives that the Holy Prophet adopted in most cases; for instance, in the case of the prisoners of the Banî Mustaliq, in which a hundred families were set at liberty, and in the case of Hawâzin, in which fully six thousand prisoners of war were released merely as an act of favour. Only in the case of the seventy prisoners taken at Badr is there mention of redemption having been taken, but this was when Islâm was very weak and the powerful enemy was determined to crush it.

4b. *Intasara min-hu* signifies *he exacted retribution from him* (*Lisân al-'Arab* (Dictionary), by 'Allâmah Abu-l-Faḍl Jamâl al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram), or *he exacted his due completely from him* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ* and the *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The meaning is that, if Allâh had pleased, He could have punished the enemies of Islâm otherwise than by war, but as He means to punish them by the hands of the Muslims, therefore battles must be fought.

5 He will guide them and improve their condition.

6 And make them enter the Garden, which He has made known to them.^a

7 O you who believe, if you help Allâh, He will help you and make firm your feet.

8 And those who disbelieve, for them is destruction, and He will destroy their works.

9 That is because they hate that which Allâh reveals, so He has rendered their deeds fruitless.

10 Have they not travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those before them? Allâh destroyed them. And for the disbelievers is the like thereof.

6a. The Garden of the next life is made known to the righteous in this life by making them taste of the religious blessings of good deeds in this very life. That a paradise is granted to the righteous in this very life is mentioned frequently in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân. It should be noted; however, as stated elsewhere, too, that triumph over those who would annihilate Truth is also spoken of as a garden in this life.

11 That is because Allâh is the Patron of those who believe, and because the disbelievers have no patron.

SECTION 2: Oppressors shall be brought low

12 Surely Allâh will make those who believe and do good enter Gardens wherein flow rivers. And those who disbelieve enjoy themselves and eat as the cattle eat, and the Fire is their abode.

13 And how many a town, more powerful than your town which has driven you out — We destroyed them, so there was no helper for them.^a

14 Is then he who has a clear argument from his *Rabb* like him to whom his evil conduct is made fair-seeming; and they follow their low desires.

15 A parable of the Garden which the dutiful are promised: Therein are rivers of water not altering for the worse, and rivers of milk whereof the taste changes not, and rivers of wine delicious to the drinkers, and rivers of honey clarified;^a and for them therein are all fruits and protection from their *Rabb*.^b (Are these) like those who abide in the Fire and who are made to drink boiling water, so it rends their bowels asunder?

13a. The town which had driven away the Holy Prophet was Makkah, and the overthrow of its power is here foretold in the clearest words. It will be seen that the Makkans were not destroyed when their final overthrow came, nor did the Holy Prophet punish them for their crimes and tyrannies against the Muslims. They were dealt with very mercifully — so mercifully indeed that the history of the world does not present another instance of such merciful treatment of a conquered nation of oppressors. By their destruction was thus meant the overthrow of their power.

15a. Note that the description given does not mention the actual blessings of paradise, for they are blessings “which no eye has seen, nor has any ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive them” (Bukhârî 59:8). The blessings mentioned here are plainly called *a parable*, an example which shows what they are like.

16 And there are those of them who seek to listen to you, till, when they go forth from you, they say to those who have been given knowledge: What was it that he said just now? These are they whose hearts Allâh has sealed and they follow their low desires.

17 And those who follow guidance; He increases them in guidance and grants them their observance of duty.

18 Wait they for aught but the Hour that it should come upon them of a sudden? Now tokens thereof have already come.^a But how will they have their reminder, when it comes on them?

19 So know that there is no god but Allâh and ask protection for thy sin and for the believing men and the believing women.^a And Allâh knows your moving about and your staying (in a place).^b

15b. Here is another instance of the use of the word *maghfirat*, showing that it does not mean forgiveness of sins, but protection from sin. Among the various blessings of paradise, which its inmates find after admission to paradise, is *maghfirat*. It is clear that they could be admitted to paradise only after forgiveness of sins, if they had any, and the commission of sins in paradise is inconceivable.

18a. By the *Hour* is to be understood the hour of their doom, the overthrow of their power, which is clearly spoken of in the previous verses. Tokens of it had already appeared, for they had seen how Islam was daily advancing, and how all their efforts to check its progress had ended in failure.

19a. Not only the Prophet but every believer is told here to keep praying to Allâh for being protected from sins, for himself and for all the believers, men as well as women; see also 40:55a, 48:2a.

19b. *Moving about* refers to man's going to and fro for the transaction of his affairs, and *staying* to taking rest.

SECTION 3: The Weak-hearted Ones

20 And those who believe say: Why is not a chapter revealed?^a But when a decisive chapter is revealed, and fighting is mentioned therein, you see those in whose hearts is a disease look to you with the look of one fainting at death. So woe to them!

21 Obedience and a gentle word (was proper). Then when the affair is settled, it is better for them if they remain true to Allâh.

22 But if you turn away, you are sure to make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship!^a

23 Those it is whom Allâh has cursed, so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes.^a

24 Do they not reflect on the Qur'ân? Or, are there locks on the hearts?

25 Surely those who turn back after guidance is manifest to them, the *shaitân* embellish it for them; and lengthen false hopes for them.

26 That is because they say to those who hate what Allâh has revealed: We will obey you in some matters. And Allâh knows their secrets.

20a. The Muslims had been persecuted beyond all measure; they had been oppressed, slain and turned out of their homes. Hence they naturally desired to be allowed to defend themselves. By *a chapter* is meant *a revelation allowing them to fight*.

22a. It is the hypocrites who are addressed in these words. *Tawallai-tum* may mean either that *you turn your backs* on the Divine commandment to fight in defence of Truth or that *you are put in authority*.

23a. Note that Allâh blinds the eyes of and makes deaf those who would not turn to the right way. The next verse makes it clear by saying that they do not reflect on the Qur'ân, as if there were locks on their hearts.

27 But how will it be when the *Malâ'ikah* cause them to die, smiting their faces and their backs?

28 That is because they follow that which displeases Allâh and are averse to His pleasure, so He makes their deeds fruitless.

SECTION 4: An Exhortation

29 Or do those in whose hearts is a disease think that Allâh will not bring forth their spite?

30 And if We please, We could show them to you so that you should know them by their marks. And certainly you can recognize them by the tone of (their) speech. And Allâh knows your deeds.

31 And certainly We shall try you, till We know those among you who strive hard, and the steadfast, and manifest your news.

32 Surely those who disbelieve and hinder (men) from Allâh's way and oppose the Messenger after guidance is quite clear to them, cannot harm Allâh in any way, and He will make their deeds fruitless.

33 O you who believe, obey Allâh and obey the Messenger and make not your deeds vain.

34 Surely those who disbelieve and hinder (human beings) from Allâh's way, then die disbelievers, Allâh will not forgive them.

35 And be not slack so as to cry for peace — and you are the uppermost — and Allâh is with you, and He will not bring your deeds to naught.

36 The life of this world is but idle sport and play, and, if you believe and keep your duty, He will give you your reward, and He does not ask of you your wealth.

37 If He should ask you for it and press you, you will be niggardly,^a and He will bring forth your malice.

38 Behold! you are those who are called to spend in Allâh's way, but among you are those who are niggardly; and whoever is niggardly, is niggardly against his or her own *nafs*. And Allâh is Self-Sufficient and you are needy. And if you turn back He will bring in your place another people, then they will not be like you.

37a. In the concluding words of verse 36, it is stated that Allâh *does not ask of human beings their wealth*, while here they are told that *if He should ask them for it, they would be niggardly*. The two statements do not contradict each other. Verse 38 makes it clear that Allâh, being Self-Sufficient, does not stand in need of human being's wealth, so He does not ask of them their wealth for His needs — He has no need at all. Yet it is true that great stress is laid on spending wealth, but that is for human being's own good. This too is made clear in verse 38 — *whoever is niggardly, is niggardly against their own nafs*. *You are needy*, we are further told. Human beings stand in need of making sacrifices for the good of their own *nafs* and, if he or she does not make a sacrifice, he or she will suffer. There is no advancement in this world without

a sacrifice, so if human beings have an urge for advancement, they must spend their wealth.